

Mystery Cloaks Fate Of Brain of Kennedy

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 26 — The preserved brain of President Kennedy, plus microscopic slides of tissues removed from his bullet wounds, have been withheld, apparently by the Kennedy family, from the assassination evidence in the National Archives, a medical expert said today.

The expert, Dr. Cyril H. Wecht, was the first critic of the Warren Commission's report on the assassination to be allowed to see items from the autopsy on the President.

He asserted that questions about President Kennedy's wounds would remain unanswered so long as these objects were not available for examination. A spokesman for the Kennedy family replied that all evidence requested by the Jus-

tice Department had been placed in the Archives and that Dr. Wecht had turned to "offensive" probing because the evidence in the Archives did not support his doubts about the official finding that the assassination was the deed of Lee Harvey Oswald alone.

Dr. Wecht spent two days in the Archives last week examining the material. He made his assertions afterward in an interview at the Archives.

Interviews with Government officials and President Kennedy's former personal secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, disclosed that the slides and probably the brain, which was removed from the body in the autopsy in 1963 and was preserved in a container of formalin, were

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delivered in a locked chest to a representative of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in 1965.

When the autopsy materials were placed in the National Archives in 1966 by Burke Marshall, a representative of the Kennedy family, the slides, the brain and possibly some other items were not included.

Mr. Marshall, who is a law professor at Yale University, said in an interview last night that he never had possession of the chest of items and that he had no knowledge of the brain or any other objects not now in the Archives.

He said that Nicholas deB. Katzenbach as Attorney General had ruled that certain X-rays, color transparencies and photographs taken at the autopsy were evidence relevant to the assassination, and that he, Mr. Marshall, obtained these from the Kennedy family and lodged them with the Archives in 1966.

Mr. Marshall said that other items had apparently not been requested by the Justice Department because "they have no bearing on who killed the President." He deplored Dr.

Wecht's "chasing after parts of the President's body because he hasn't found any evidence that anything else was wrong."

Foreign Object Shown

Dr. Wecht, who is coroner of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Pa., and a past president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, said that the slides should show definitely if all of President Kennedy's gunshot wounds were from the rear, as was concluded by the commission of inquiry under the then Chief Justice, Earl Warren.

Entering bullets burn and soil tissues around the wound of entry but not at the point of exit, he said. Thus, the microscopic slides could settle the question whether the bullets that passed through the President's head and body had been fired from the rear.

Examination of the brain is necessary, Dr. Wecht said, because photographs of the top of the removed brain, which were shown to him, disclose a sizable foreign object that could have been a flattened bullet fragment or a brain tumor.

In either event, he said, it is "unacceptable" that the public has never been told what it was. He described the object as a parallelogram at least one-half by three-quarters of an inch in size.

Will Ask Inspection

The official report of the autopsy performed by three military physicians on Nov. 22, 1963, the day of the assassination in Dallas, did not mention the object. A subsequent panel of four physicians appointed by Ramsey Clark when he was Attorney General—they also were not shown the actual brain—reported the presence of the object in the photographs.

Dr. Wecht, who is both a pathologist and a lawyer, said he felt certain that the brain was still "around somewhere" and that he intended to ask Mr. Marshall to let a panel of experts inspect it. "Who would have taken the responsibility to destroy the brain?" he asked.

The records of the Warren Commission show only that the brain was "removed and preserved for further study" in the autopsy, and that the usual sections were not removed for analysis "in the interest of preserving the specimen."

It is standard procedure in such cases to remove the brain and to "fix" it in formalin to

prepare it for tests. Usually, the tests are not concluded until after the burial, and the brain is then destroyed.

After the Kennedy autopsy, the Secret Service and other agencies delivered the various medical items to President Kennedy's personal physician, Vice Adm. George G. Burkley.

Marion Johnson, director of the National Archives' legislative, judicial and fiscal branch, said yesterday that in 1965 Dr. Burkley delivered the items to Mrs. Lincoln, who was working with President Kennedy's effects at the Archives.

Dr. Burkley signed a two-page "memorandum of transfer," dated April 26, 1965, but he did not disclose to whom the transfer had been made. Mr. Johnson characterized it as "in essence an inventory" of the items. He said that Mrs. Lincoln had turned all the material over to Robert F. Kennedy, the President's brother, but that when the material was returned by Mr. Marshall in 1966, some of the items on Admiral Burkley's inventories were not included.

Inventory Kept Secret

Mr. Johnson said that he "believes" the brain was on the list of items turned over to Mrs. Lincoln by Admiral Burkley. He said that the brain is not now at the Archives.

Mrs. Lincoln, who is now in a staff job at the House of Representatives, said that Admiral Burkley delivered a locked chest to her at the Archives and that a few days later Angie Nevelle, Robert Kennedy's secretary, arrived and took it away. Mrs. Lincoln said that she had not looked inside the chest or read Admiral Burkley's inventory.

The full extent of the items that have been withheld may never be known. Mr. Johnson said that Admiral Burkley's inventory was being kept secret at the behest of the Kennedy family, on the ground that mention of some of the items would be "objectionable." Sources close to the Kennedy family suggested that among these might be medical reports that predated the assassination.

When Mr. Marshall turned the material over to the Archives in 1966, it was under an agreement that only official Government agencies could see it for five years. When that period expired last year, several physicians wrote to Mr. Marshall asking to see the items.

Until last week Mr. Marshall had permitted only one expert, Dr. John K. Lattimer of New York, to see them. This had drawn criticism from critics of

the Warren report because Dr. Lattimer is a urologist, and not a specialist in forensic pathology, and had published articles supporting the commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in killing the President.

After Dr. Lattimer saw the items last January, he declared that they reinforced his earlier belief.

Dr. Wecht has written articles questioning the Warren report's conclusions. While he was here last week, he was provided transportation by the Committee to Investigate Assassinations, a Washington-based organization that includes District Attorney Jim Garrison of New Orleans.

After seeing the items, Dr. Wecht conceded that the autopsy pictures and X-rays "strongly support" the Warren Commission's conclusion that President Kennedy was struck in the head and body by bullets fired from the rear.

But he said that examina-



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Dr. Cyril H. Wecht has charged that material was withheld from the National Archives.

tion of the bullet that is believed to have passed through President Kennedy's body, and of photographs and films taken at the scene—material never in the Kennedy family's possession that has been in the Archives for years—"destroy" the Warren Commission's theory that the same bullet caused the severe wounds to John B. Connally, then Governor of

Texas, riding in the President's car.

He said that the bullet's "almost perfect" condition made it virtually impossible that it could have caused such damage, and that the angle of its path through President Kennedy made it unlikely that it could have struck Governor Connally in the car's "jump" seat in front.

He concluded that Oswald could not have fired the three bullets so fast on his bolt-action rifle, adding, "That proves a conspiracy right there."

Dr. Wecht said that the autopsy pictures and X-rays turned over by the Kennedy family raised two additional questions.

Positions of Wound

One is why the wound in the back of President Kennedy's head was stated in the Warren report to have been four inches lower than the pictures show, and why the Warren report's drawing shows the bullet wound in the back to be several inches lower than the photographs.

The other is a "little flap" of loose scalp that is visible just above the hairline on the back left side of the President's head. This might have been an entrance or exit wound, he said, but it has not been reported before.

Dr. Wecht said that he would write to Mr. Marshall, asking to lay all these questions to rest by again inspecting the materials, plus the brain and microscopic slides of the wounds, with a team of experts, including a radiologist, a neurosurgeon, a firearms expert, a criminologist and an examiner of questioned documents.

Mr. Marshall said, "If we were trying to hide something, we wouldn't have let Wecht see the materials." But he said it was "offensive for there to be all this probing—it is a terrible thing to do to that family."

Dr. Wecht, 41 years old, is a director of the Pittsburgh Institute of Legal Medicine and the Institute of Forensic Sciences at Duquesne University. He also is a research professor of law at Duquesne and a pathology instructor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, from which he obtained his doctorate in 1956.